

WHEN NEWARK WAS YOUNGER

The Public Schools

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WHEN Newark became a city in 1836 the people were accustomed to paying by appropriation from the public funds, for the education of poor children. The small annual appropriation was augmented by the income received from bequests from two wealthy citizens, Thomas Longworth, and Stephen Sayres, to be spent for establishing schools partially or wholly free, and for paying private school teachers in proportion to the number of children taught by them.

Beginning in 1828 the city also received, and spent on the education of the poor, funds apportioned among the townships of New Jersey from the State School Fund. The School Committee, elected annually according to the provisions of the Newark City Charter of 1836, decided in 1838 that "the distribution of the public moneys to private schools, over which they could exercise no efficient control was injudicious and improper."

The School Committee, therefore, established in 1838 in each of the four wards of the city a free public school. Since the city owned no proper buildings these schools were opened in rented quarters. The North Ward Public School was established in the Washington School House which had been used as a private school up to that time.

A two-story structure, built of stone, it stood at the corner of Washington and Essex streets, and had two school rooms, accommodating 200 children. The building was torn down many years ago, and to the best of our knowledge there is no picture of it. The schools in the East Ward and in the South Ward occupied the basements of churches on Market street and on Franklin street. Two existing school buildings were used for the West Ward Public School.

THE "Female Department" was connected with the Female Union School in Harrison street, now Halsey, between Maiden lane and William streets, established in 1822 as a charity school. The "Male Department" was in the first story of Mr. Nathan Hedges's School House in Bank street, whose second story housed a high school for boys taught by Mr. Hedges, to which students were admitted by certificates from the School Committee.

These free schools in rented quarters were immediately [illegible] Newark Common Council to realize that authority from the state would be required to enlarge the facilities and to provide an efficient general system of public schools. An enabling act was passed by the New Jersey Legislature in 1850 and an act incorporating the Newark Board of Education, in 1853. Since that date it has been the aim of the board, in the words of the first school superintendent, Dr. Stephen Congar, "to afford the opportunity for a good common education to every [illegible]."

The establishing of a public school system was approved by the vast majority of the citizens who cheerfully submitted to increase taxation, for they knew the value of what they were receiving. An even greater number of children flocked to the classrooms. In the year 1855, for the first time in the history of Newark, more than half of the children capable of attending school between the ages of 5 and 15 years were registered in the public schools. By 1857 more than two-thirds of the youth of Newark were attending the public schools.

There was opposition to the public school system on the part of some taxpayers who maintained that the public schools were expensive and the cause of oppressive taxation. Superintendent Congar pointed out that statistics showed common schools in numerous cities to be less expensive than private schools. He then went on to state his philosophy of education: "The education of the young is an essential condition of individual prosperity and national wealth. The preservation of our national independence, the maintenance of our free institutions, the security of the rights of person and property, by the enactment of good laws and a pure and honest administration of the government, all depend upon the intelligence and virtue of the people.

"If these be wanting, neither extent of territory, nor forts bristling with cannon, nor standing armies, nor floating navies, nor millions of treasure, will defend and preserve the liberties of the country. Ignorance is the most deadly foe to human society, the parent of vice, and the partner of crime. To educate the young, and thus to establish upon a perpetual basis free institutions, personal rights, material prosperity and social progress, is the prime necessity and the highest duty of the State."

[illegible] the great majority of children could attend school until they were 18. Many left at 12 or 13—some even younger—to enter industry. Other children were so poor they lacked the incentive to enter school or the proper clothes to wear there. The earliest regulations of the Newark Board of Education provided that "primary industrial schools shall be established for the instruction of destitute and vagrant children of both sexes in such studies and pursuits as may be deemed expedient, but no expenditure shall be made by the Board of Education except for educational purposes."

Two industrial schools had been established before 1854 by a group of philanthropic women, at whose request the Board of Education took over the schools in 1856 and opened two more. Provided with hot dinners and clothing by the ladies who interested themselves in their education, these children were taught habits of study and industry, and were often fitted to enter advanced grades in the regular public schools. Newark was one of the first cities in the United States to establish public industrial schools.

In 1854 the first step was taken toward a system of graded schools, when a primary school was opened in Union Chapel in the Fifth Ward. This was a tiny one-room school with one teacher. In the next two years 12 other primary schools were

Modern at the time, Newark High School was dedicated in 1855. The following century, site of city's first high school at Washington and Linden streets was occupied by Essex Market.

LESSONS IN THREE LETTERS. 33

XVI.

Fly,	*bad*,	eye,	*way*,
has,	*use*,	How,	*fly*,
how,	lap,	*out*,	sit,
all,	put,	you,	get,
you,	for,	Yes,	cry,
did,	*now*,	out,	now.

The Fly.

Lo! a fly has got in my eye; I can not see at all: oh! my eye is put *out*. You *bad* fly to get in my eye. I can not see the *way to go*. How can I get the fly *out* of my eye? Can *you* get it out for me? Yes, if you do

Reproduced same size is page from "Young Pupil's First Book," published in 1849. It was, according to title page, "beautifully embellished and adapted to the capacities of children."



Still in use is the Maypole shown with Burnet Street School kindergartners of the early 1900's. At the same time, cooking became a subject for school girls (below) pictured beside gas stoves.

opened, all in rented quarters. The typical primary school had one large room, an enrollment of about 150 children, and an average attendance of 125. The principal or head teacher and one assistant, usually taught the entire class, the principal's salary range was from $225 to $300 a year, her assistant's from $100 to $200 a year! They taught from 9 to 4, and were required to attend the Saturday morning normal school classes begun in 1855 all during the school term, from 8:30 to 12:30.

Meanwhile, the grammar schools were being organized. The first grammar schools had two floors, one floor for the "Male Department," one for the "Female Department." Each floor had one large room, presided over by a principal and one or two assistants who looked after an enrollment of about 350 children, with an average daily attendance of about 300!

An incentive toward good behavior and close attention to studies was furnished by competition for places in the public high school opened in 1855. Only a few could be chosen for this high honor which was coveted by many. The Newark High School at Washington and Linden streets is remembered with affection by many older Newarkers. The original public high school, conducted from 1838 on by Nathan Hedges, was the first in the state, and one of the earliest in the nation.

THE early grammar schools of Newark are of particular interest to us because several of them are still in existence as elementary or special schools. State Street School, Lafayette Street School and Wickliffe Street School have all celebrated their 100th anniversaries in the last three years. The State street building erected in 1846 is actually the oldest public school building still in use in Newark, but the Wickliffe street school exterior is less changed by alterations, though the neighborhood has changed greatly since the Morris Canal flowed a stone's throw from the building. The original part of the Lafayette Street School building, dating back to 1848 was torn down in 1911, but the cornerstone remains. The first building erected in Newark for public school use was the Third Ward School which was built on Court street in 1843.

A historic school building no longer in use is the Market Street School, built in 1847 as a grammar school. At that time housing the incredible number of 300 pupils in its two small floors, and educating them at a cost of less than $10 a year for each, it was later used as a normal school, as a high school annex, and as a special school. For several years in the 1870s it housed the school for colored children whose principal, James Baxter, came here at the age of 19 to give 45 years of service as a Newark teacher. The school for Negro children had previously occupied the State street building, one on Fair street (now Lafayette) and one on Commerce street. Mr. Baxter did not rest until he saw Negro pupils admitted to the high school, and to all the elementary schools of Newark. It is fitting that we honor his memory in the name of the Baxter Terrace Apartments.

AMONG the many new ideas tried in the early schools was the instruction of grammar school boys and girls in the same classes. The conservative Newarkers were sure that the "young ladies" would suffer harm from association in the class room with rude boys, even though, it was pointed out, their parents had been educated in district schools where there was no segregation. The provision of a separate "Male Department" and "Female Department" was first done away with in the primary schools and the teaching of boys and girls together was experimentally introduced into the 12th Ward grammar school in 1862. No harm to the morals of the young seems to have taken place and the change made it possible to have better grading of the classes, and more effective teaching.

When we go back to the newspapers of the period we are very conscious of what a great debt we owe to the pioneer teachers, principals and superintendents of Newark's public schools. The Newark Daily Advertiser for 1846 which carries reports on the building of Wickliffe Street and State Street schools also tells distressing stories of the arrival of thousands of European immigrants in New York, starving and friendless, after weeks on sailing vessels—the "Displaced Persons" of 100 years ago.

Their need for help in adjustment created civic problems that filled old Newarkers with dismay. Far-seeing men realized that the public school must assist the hard-pressed newcomers in training their children and preparing them to fit into the industrial and social life of Newark. When, in 1874, the State of New Jersey passed a compulsory education law, Newark had a well developed school system, well graded, and equipped to take care of the children of all the people.

COVER PHOTO

Kindergartners at St. Joseph's School, Maplewood, will not only wear caps and gowns and receive 73 "diplomas" today, but will march in procession from the school to parish hall. Today's cover photo shows "grads" Barbara Ann Gaul and Michael Kancewak rehearsing for roles.